



Arizona's Meth Crisis 2006

**Arizona
Attorney General
Terry Goddard**

Educating • Protecting
Empowering
Arizona Consumers

**Arizona
Attorney General's
Office**

1275 West
Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
602.542.4266

400 West Congress
South Building
Suite 315
Tucson, Arizona 85701
520.628.6504

Outside the Phoenix
or Tucson metro area
800.352.8431

www.azag.gov

The destructive impact of methamphetamine in Arizona has been staggering. Meth devastates not only those using the drug, but also their family, friends and neighbors. The close connection between meth and many other crimes is well established.

The information below summarizes relevant facts about the problem in our state. On the back are answers to frequently asked questions about meth.

Arizona experience with the clandestine meth lab problem: 2000-2005

- 1,412 meth production related seizures
- Disposal costs for gross contamination associated with meth labs exceeded \$4.1 million
- In 2003, 38% of males and 42% of females booked in Maricopa County jail tested positive for meth
- Arizonans spent millions of tax dollars addressing the violence and property crime committed by meth cooks and meth users

Impact of meth labs on children

- From 2000-2005, 408 children were rescued from meth labs, 281 in Maricopa County alone
- Surveys have shown 65% of Arizona child abuse and neglect cases involve meth
- 30-35% of meth labs seized are residences with children
- 33% of children found at meth labs tested positive for meth between 2000 and 2002
- Prenatal exposure to meth causes infants to be six times more likely to be born with birth defects such as spina bifida, club foot, intestinal abnormalities, and skeletal abnormalities
- Meth cookers often have guns, weapons and booby-traps to protect their drugs and labs, posing a serious safety risk for children
- Children found in meth labs often suffer from developmental delays and are likely to have been abused and/or neglected

- Children of meth users and cooks become society's responsibility and cost Arizona taxpayers millions of dollars for special services, including foster care and specialized health care

Fighting meth cooks

- Restricting meth cooks' access to pseudoephedrine reduced the number of meth lab seizures in Oklahoma **by 80%**
- Over a dozen states passed laws similar to Oklahoma's and significantly reduced meth cooking in their states

Risks from meth labs

- Meth addicts turn to crime to support their habits, especially identity theft, forgery, robbery and prostitution
- Due to the flammable nature of the chemicals used in cooking meth, fires and explosions are common
- Production of meth exposes children, firefighters, law enforcement, and neighbors to toxic gases and hazardous chemicals
- 51% of injuries at meth labs happen to first responders



- The typical meth lab cooker produces 48 to 72 times a year, creating the possibility for explosive reactions each time
- Each pound of meth produced leaves behind an estimated 5-7 pounds of toxic waste

Costs and impact of meth

- Meth is the leading drug related law enforcement problem in the country
- The rates of meth hospital admissions drastically increased from 1990-2004
- Maricopa County: 855% higher

- Pima County: 1940% higher
- Rural Counties: 2950% higher
- 70% of reporting counties stated that robberies or burglaries have increased because of meth use
- 62% report increases in domestic violence
- 40-50% of total arrests between 2000-2005 were meth related

- Counties in southwestern states reported a 96% increase in arrests involving meth during the past three years
- Nearly half the responding county hospitals reported that methamphetamine is the top illicit drug involved in scenarios at their hospitals
- Exposure to meth chemicals causes chemical burns, respiratory problems, lung and tissue damage, and brain toxicity in children
- 90-95% of all mail theft and mail fraud in the greater Tucson area has a nexus to meth



Questions and answers about methamphetamine

What is meth?

Methamphetamine is a powerful, long-acting central nervous system stimulant that is highly addictive. It can come in crystal form or as a white, usually odorless, bitter-tasting powder that easily dissolves in alcohol or water and can be smoked, injected or snorted. Meth is known by a variety of street names, including speed, crank, vitamin C, go-fast and chalk.



Where is it made?

Much of the meth used in Arizona is produced in labs in Mexico and Southern California run by organized crime and street gangs. The remaining supply comes from makeshift meth labs found in kitchens, garages, bedrooms, barns, vacant buildings, campgrounds, hotels and motels and trunks of cars, right here in Arizona.

How is it made?

Meth is the only illegal drug made from legally obtained ingredients such as over-the-counter cold medications containing pseudoephedrine and some of the following: red phosphorous, hydrochloric acid, anhydrous ammonia, drain cleaner, battery acid, lye, lantern fuel, and anti-freeze.

What are the short-term effects of taking meth?

Immediately after smoking or injecting, the user experiences an intense sensation, called a "rush" or

"flash," that lasts only a few minutes and is described as extremely pleasurable. (Snorting or swallowing meth produces euphoria – a high, but not a rush.) Following the "rush," there is typically a state of high agitation that can lead to violent behavior. Other possible effects include hyperactivity and insomnia, decreased appetite, irritability/aggression, anxiety, nervousness, convulsions and heart attack.

What are the long-term effects of taking meth?

Meth is extremely addictive. Some experts believe it is the most addictive drug available. Users can develop a tolerance quickly, needing larger amounts to get high. In some cases, users forego food and sleep and take more meth every few hours for days, "binging" until they run out of the drug or become too disorganized to continue using. Chronic use can cause paranoia, hallucinations, repetitive behavior, compulsive behavior, severe gum disease and tooth decay, and delusions of parasites or insects crawling under the skin.

Where can I learn about meth treatment programs?

You can call Community Information and Referral in Maricopa County at

602.263.8856 or outside the county at 1.800.352.3792. Calls to the nonprofit agency's 24-hour Help Hotline are confidential and free. You may also find information on its Web site at www.cir.org.

Who uses meth?

- More than 12.3 million Americans (approximately 5.2% of the population) have tried meth, and 1.5 million are regular users
- Meth cooks and meth users have been found in urban and rural areas, in rich and in poor neighborhoods

What should you look for if you suspect a meth lab in your neighborhood?

- Unusual strong chemical odors such as ammonia (smells similar to cat urine) and acetone (smells similar to fingernail polish remover)
- Excess amounts of cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine
- Empty pill bottles or blister packs
- Propane/Freon tanks with blue corrosion on fittings or spray-painted or burned, with bent or tampered valves
- Starting fluid cans opened from the bottom



- Heating sources such as hotplates/torches
- Hoses leading outside for ventilation
- Soft drink bottles with hoses running from them
- Drain cleaner, paint thinner, toluene, denatured alcohol, ammonia, acid, starter fluid, antifreeze, hydrogen peroxide, rock salt, iodine
- Lantern or camp stove fuel
- Iodine- or chemical-stained bathrooms or kitchen fixtures
- Evidence of chemical waste or dumping
- Secretive or unfriendly occupants
- Frequent visitors, particularly at unusual times

Do not enter a site that you think may have been used for cooking meth. Meth labs present extreme dangers from explosions and exposure to hazardous chemicals. If you suspect an illegal lab, contact the police or sheriff's department or call the methamphetamine hotline at 1.877.787.6384. If it's an emergency, call 911.

